

**State Program Standing Committee
Child, Adolescent, and Family Unit**
Division of Mental Health
Department of Health
Agency of Human Services

Minutes of January 23, 2005 Meeting
108 Cherry Street, Burlington

Present: Carla Brisson, Amy Churchill, Kathy Holsopple, Zachary Hughes, Karen Mehrtens, Carl Theodore

Guests: Charlie Biss, Alice Maynard

I. Updates

- A. Minutes of the December 12 meeting:
approved as written.
- B. Committee membership:
Alice reported that the slate of nominees has gone to the Commissioner's office for approval; next step will be AHS Secretary's office; then the Governor's office.
- C. Program Review Site Visit:
The next site visit will be March 6 to Clara Martin Center in Randolph. Three committee members will participate: Amy, Karen M., and Zachary. Alice will see about carpooling arrangements.
- D. Recent Developments:
Charlie distributed a handout: "Highlights of the Governor's Recommended Budget for Mental Health." He noted:
- 4% inflationary increase
 - .6% (or \$607,091) toward caseload pressures in Children's Division which has been helping to pay for services to youth with developmental delays, youth on the autism spectrum, non-adjudicated sex offenders, and transition age youth.
 - The "increase in Children's Collaboratives (\$10,137,030) is not all new money, but includes the already budgeted amounts from previous years and last year's slight increases in programs (e.g., Success Beyond Six).
 - The "Child Alternative Transportation: \$15,000" reflects the cost we would have incurred last year if we had been able to transport the 15 youth subsequently deemed not needing to travel to the Brattleboro Retreat's hospital placement in restraints even though they were involuntary admissions. It is a beginning of a transportation line item. CAFU cannot carve out funding from the current DMH contract with the sheriffs; that line item is primarily for adult mental health. Since September 2005, CAFU has needed to transport 11 youth to the Brattleboro Retreat's inpatient unit. Three of those 11 were involuntary; one went in an ambulance, one with his parents, and one with mental health workers. We are finding that just having the option helps to de-escalate the behavior of some youth.

Charlie also distributed an e-mail from the Vermont Association for Mental Health dated 1-20-06. The memo summarized the recent testimony given to the House Human Services Committee on the "state of children's mental health policy and services." Kathy Holsopple and Carla Brisson of our SPSC have been active in helping to provide information to the legislature. Charlie reminded the legislators that 12 years ago they had supported Access to help stem the flood of youth with mental health crises unnecessarily

entering state custody. The initiative produced impressive results. At that time, we were serving 5,000 youth per year; last year we served 10,000 youth, yet the emergency response system has not been augmented in those 12 intervening years. The legislative committee wanted to know what specifically should be done to augment the system; Charlie believes we need a summer study committee to answer that question thoughtfully.

SPSC discussion points:

- Would replacing the 6 hospital diversion beds that were lost when Harbour House closed merely create an explosion of children entering them. Would we be better off investing that money to improve current crisis response services? Noted that there are criteria to enter such placements and that it may not be a matter of “either/or,” but rather that we need a continuum of services as more children than necessary enter hospital placements.
- Discovered no one knew exactly what, if any, bills were being introduced regarding transition age youth. Everyone will attempt to research this point for the February meeting.
- We know our JOBS programs produce great results for youth transitioning to adult life. Unfortunately, we are in danger of losing at least one program this year because of the way we fund it. Charlie suggested the priority strategy for this topic this year should be to prevent erosion of the JOBS initiative.
- The Jobs Corps program is a federal initiative; in Vermont, it is located in Vergennes. It aims to provide transition age youth with sufficient skills and support to find a decent job. The committee asked Amy to bring in information about their eligibility criteria and general program goals for the February meeting.

II. Standing Updates

Tabled due to lack of time.

III. Designation

- A. Reviewed CAFU report for Lamoille County Mental Health.
- B. After discussion, committee decided to recommend “Re-designate—minor deficiencies requiring action plan for corrections.”
- C. Members discussed the new report format. They preferred the older format as it contained more information. Alice said that the new format was decided upon after meetings with DMH and DS staff and representatives from The Council. Designated agencies wanted a simpler format. It was agreed that there would be less text in this document which is focused on quality assurance (*i.e.*, whether or not an agency met the minimum standard as defined in *Administrative Rules on Agency Designation*). There is more detail in the program review reports which are focused on continuous quality improvement; the agency’s most recent program review report will be an attachment to each designation report. Program review reports typically report many good practices of the agency, challenges the agency faces (some of which it has little or no control over), and several suggestions about ways it could continue to improve. The agency is not required to respond to any of the suggestions. Designation reports continue to state if the agency met each of the specific standards. Now text will be added only if the agency did not meet the standard, so the staff will know what to focus on in their required corrective action plan.

IV. Respite

As requested at the January meeting, Alice shared with the committee the status of the respite program. In particular, the program has evolved considerably over the last decade, getting more flexible to meet the needs of children and families. This had resulted in a lack of uniform data reporting. In the past year, we have updated the guidelines for the program and worked toward reliable data. We are currently working to provide a training manual for possible use by all the Respite Coordinators in children's mental health; it is due out later this spring.

V. Hot Topics

Tabled.

VI. Public Comment

None.

VII. Potential agenda items for next meeting, February 27, 2006

- Follow-up to transformation grant work group meeting: Zach
- Program Review report for Northwest Counseling and Support Services, St. Albans